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## *Occasional Paper*

### **Poland and The Soviet Union: The Post-Communist Relationship**

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# Poland and the Soviet Union the Post-Communist Relationship<sup>1</sup>

Roger E Kanet and Brian V Souders

A recent analysis of USSR Polish relations began as follows Short of an unexpected decline in Soviet power politics in Poland toward the end of this century will continue to operate within the same international framework of domination as in the previous four and a half decades <sup>2</sup> Despite changes already evident in Soviet foreign relations and despite the growing evidence of the vitality of internal opposition in the communist ruled countries two truths continued to underlie Western analysis that communists would never give up political power without a fight and that the Soviet leadership would never permit the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe <sup>3</sup>

In this article the authors are especially interested in explaining the rapid collapse of communism throughout Eastern Europe and the willingness of the Soviet leadership to accept that demise Moreover they examine the role of Poland in this process and the probable nature of future relations between independent and democratic Poland and the USSR

## The Central European Revolutions of 1989

The year 1989 was one of historic importance for Poland Eastern Europe and the entire international community and a watershed in the history of Europe At the beginning of the year political leaders in Poland and Hungary gave enthusiastic support to Soviet leader Mikhail S Gorbachev's reform programs Yet even in Poland the impetus for successful reform seemed to have stalled By the end of the year a Solidarity government ruled Poland, the Berlin Wall had fallen and German reunification was but a matter of time Ceaucescu's dictatorship had been overthrown in Romania, and the world renowned dissident playwright Vaclav Havel had been elected president in Czechoslovakia Revolutionary change in the full sense of the term was occurring throughout the region as the basic structures of domestic political power including the formal institutions of governance and the structures of the European inter state system were radically changing

Central to the dramatic changes throughout Eastern Europe were those that resulted during September 1989 in the creation of the first non communist Polish government since the 1940s In the past, any movement toward reform met with strong Soviet resistance By 1989 the USSR's policy had shifted to the point where it encouraged reform and was even willing to accept expanded pluralism and the demise of communist dictatorships as the price for economic efficiency and political stability in the region and enhanced long term political and economic relationships with the West.

The radical changes that occurred in Eastern Europe during 1989 must be viewed in the context of Soviet style state socialism which consisted of a highly centralized economy emphasizing heavy industry authoritarian political structures to ensure political control by miniscule and illegitimate communist party elites and a strong dependency relationship between the USSR and the smaller communist states However since Stalin's death in 1953 evidence mounted that demonstrated both the political and the economic weaknesses of the system

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2 Arthur R Rachwald Poland Toward the Year 2000 in Richard F Staar ed *United States East European Relations in the 1990s* (New York Crane Russak 1989) p 83

3 The term Eastern Europe refers to the countries that comprised the Soviet sphere of domination until very recently—including Bulgaria Czechoslovakia the GDR Hungary Poland and Romania while "East-Central Europe" refers to newly independent Czechoslovakia Hungary and Poland

Sporadically and unsuccessfully until 1989 attempts were made in the various countries concerned to reform portions of the state socialist system inherited from Stalin

After the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975 organized movements committed to the protection of political and human rights were active (and under pressure) in several European communist states. Evidence also mounted about the economic stagnation and the fact that the communist economies were falling behind their capitalist counterparts in the development and adaptation of modern technology. Moreover, the growing shortages of consumer goods and housing and the inability to halt the degradation of the environment contributed to growing dissatisfaction with the existing political system and to the demand for political reform that would extend effective political participation beyond the narrow circle of the communist party elite.

Even before the rise to political prominence of Mikhail Gorbachev and the introduction of new thinking in the USSR, evidence existed of a growing awareness of the nature of the problems facing communist ruled states, the imperatives of initiating economic and political reform, and expanding flexibility in relations between the USSR and its Eastern European allies. Thus, by the 1980s the situation throughout much of the region was ripe for political change. However, the efforts at reform expanded to the point of dismantling essential elements of the traditional state socialist system only after 1985—from the dominance of central planning to the emergence of officially sanctioned pluralism and the demise of the communist *nomenklatura*.

### Gorbachev's Reforms and The Central European Revolutions

Since Gorbachev's reforms were central to the revolutionary changes that occurred throughout Eastern Europe, it is important to outline their most prominent contours. First, the USSR was already in the throes of a major crisis when Gorbachev became General Secretary. The Soviet gross national product had stagnated, the population suffered from increasing political ennui and withdrawal, alcoholism and incompetent medical care resulted in reduced life expectancy and a higher infant mortality rate.<sup>4</sup> The USSR's allies in Eastern Europe suffered from similar problems and were a growing drain on the Soviet economy. Third World clients had proven incapable of establishing stable political or economic systems and contributed to the growing costs of empire for Moscow. The exponential growth of USSR military capabilities had occurred at the expense of other sectors of the economy, and many of the assumptions that undergirded Soviet foreign policy during the Brezhnev years had proven false.

In this environment, Gorbachev proposed dramatic reforms as a means to rejuvenate the USSR's economic and political system. In effect, the initial Gorbachev message can be summarized as follows: the USSR faced an economic and political crisis that undermined its ability to provide basic goods and services to its population and threatened to erode its position as a global power. Revolutionary changes were required within the economy to deal with these problems and to increase efficiency, enhance quality, and reduce the technological gap with the West. Such reforms, however, would generate opposition within the party-state bureaucracy that benefits greatly from the perquisites associated with the present system. To overcome this opposition, *glasnost* (or openness) and democratization were to create an alliance between the reform-minded leadership and the masses of the population aimed at exposing the corruption, incompetence, and inefficiencies of the current system and thus contributing to the success of the reform effort.

Thus, *perestroika*, openness, and democratization were interrelated from the beginning of the Gorbachev reform effort. Moreover, new thinking and new behavior in foreign policy were also an integral part of the reforms. The nature, scope, and cost of domestic reform would require a peaceful international environment in which Soviet leaders would be able to devote more of their attention to the issues associated with reform. Moreover, the costs of Soviet foreign policy would have to be reduced dramatically to cover the expanded investment demands of a successful revitalization of the economy. Since past commitments of extensive

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4 The following discussion is based especially on Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987); Abel Aganbegyan, *The Economic Challenge of Perestroika* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988); and Ed A. Hewett, *Reforming the Soviet Economy: Equality versus Efficiency* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1988).



resources to allies and clients in Eastern Europe and the Third World had not resulted in politically stable and economically productive states those commitments would have to be reconsidered. Since the expansion of Soviet military capabilities had not resulted in enhanced security efforts would be essential to achieve security through accommodation and assurance strategies toward the West and thus to reduce the military burden.

Soviet policy after 1985 underwent more than mere rhetorical change. The dramatic shift in the USSR's position on a number of issues concerning nuclear weapons and arms control was essential to the agreement to scrap all intermediate range nuclear weapons in Europe and Asia. The announcement, in December 1988 that the USSR would unilaterally reduce its military strength in Central Europe and the implementation of the first stage of that withdrawal represented yet another shift in policy.

An important component of Gorbachev's foreign policy initiatives concerned bilateral relations with the countries of Eastern Europe. By 1987 his response to the growing economic and political problems of the region was to call upon the Eastern European leaders to reform their own political and economic systems. Unlike past Soviet rulers Gorbachev argued that ultimately the decision on reform as other major decisions must be made by the Eastern Europeans themselves. Moscow no longer viewed itself as the final arbiter of ideological orthodoxy for its clients according to the new interpretation of socialist internationalism.

At first Gorbachev hoped that Eastern European communists could reform their economies and political systems to make them viable and productive. However after they failed in this task he accepted the idea of a region of stable economically efficient though non communist states as preferable to a continuation of the effort to maintain politically illegitimate and economically stagnant communist regimes by force or threat of force. Policy was changed in the expectation that mutually beneficial relationships can emerge in the future between the Soviet Union and Europe's dominant economic power Germany and a revitalized set of 'Finland like' states in Eastern Europe.

Several important points emerge from the discussion to this point. First the revolutionary changes that occurred in all the Soviet dominated communist states were interconnected and had common roots in emerging social groups which placed increasingly greater demands for participation on the communist elites which dominated the systems. Authoritarian elites were no longer able to suppress these groups nor to ignore their demands. The result was that during the last months of 1989 they were overthrown.

In addition to similar origins the 1989 revolutions were also influenced by changes in Soviet policy toward the region and by the demonstration effect of developments throughout the area. Gorbachev's repeated assertion that Eastern Europeans should determine their own fate and that the USSR would not intervene to undermine the process of long needed political reform contributed to the radical political changes.<sup>5</sup> This 'hands off' approach to the challenges to the ruling party elites in Eastern Europe—in fact Gorbachev openly advocated political reform in some countries—encouraged those advocating political change to press forward their demands more openly.<sup>6</sup> The success of the Polish Solidarity movement in challenging communist party domination winning an election and taking over political power—all without Soviet intervention—exerted a powerful influence elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

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5 During his address to the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on 6 July 1989 Gorbachev said: "Social and political orders in one country or another have changed in the past and may change in the future. But this is exclusively the affair of the people of that country and is their choice. Any interference in the domestic affairs and any attempts to restrict the sovereignty of states—friends, allies and others—are inadmissible." (M. S. Gorbachev "Obshcheevropeiskii protsess idet vpered" *Pravda* 7 July 1989).

In Helsinki in October he set up Soviet-Finnish relations as a model for relations between a big country and a small country, a model of relations between states with different social systems, a model of relations between neighbors. Quoted in *New York Times* 26 October 1989 p. 7.

6 Speaking against charges by CPSU conservatives that Gorbachev's policies had resulted in the loss of Eastern Europe then Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze responded:

Perestroika is not responsible for the destruction of the political structure of Europe. It was destroyed by the will of peoples no longer willing to put up with oppression. The undermining of faith in socialism based on suppression and violence began in the 1940s, not in 1985. Remember the Czechoslovak Spring? Surely the Czechoslovak Spring could not be viewed as imperialist intrigues. And how many examples of that kind are there! (E. Shevardnadze Vystupleniia na plenum TsK KPSS *Pravda* 8 February 1990 p. 3).

Events in Eastern Europe after mid 1989 went far beyond anything envisaged in Gorbachev's initial reform program for the USSR. Gorbachev was committed to retaining communist party dominance while expanding some political liberties and making an essentially state socialist economic system more efficient and more responsive to public needs—though developments in the Baltics in early 1991 seem to indicate that whatever was left of a commitment to reform has been abandoned in the effort to reassert central control. The East Europeans, however, moved far beyond those positions. The new Polish government has already dismantled most of the infrastructure of the centralized economic system throughout the region. pluralist governments committed to political democratization and economic privatization are now in place.

As Poland pursues its independent path and as the USSR seemingly stands on the verge of disintegration or a return to the authoritarian policies of the past, what are the prospects for relations between these countries? That is the question to be addressed after the developments in Poland that led to the 1989 revolution are outlined.

### Poland in the 1980s Background to the Revolution

The irony of developments in Poland is that of a society which moved the furthest toward genuine political pluralism during the communist era despite the imposition of martial law in 1981-83. Moreover, events in Poland served as a stimulus to (or at least catalyst for) reform elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Autonomous societal initiatives for reform had begun long before Solidarity became synonymous with Polish opposition. In the pre-Solidarity years, analysts identified three main currents from which society would press reforms on state authority: intellectuals and students, industrial workers, and the Catholic Church. Initially these groups were isolated from one another. In 1968, students and intellectuals presented demands for greater freedom of expression but remained isolated from workers, while in 1970-71 workers struck *en masse* for economic demands and confronted state suppression without the support of the intellectuals and students.<sup>7</sup> As the economic and social situation worsened throughout the country, the center of gravity of reform shifted from limited circles of intellectuals to a broader social strain involving thousands prepared to engage in public protest. A social movement gradually evolved which shifted its strategy from attempting to influence the system by exerting pressure from within the party to an emphasis on social pressure from outside designed to transform the relationship between state and society.<sup>8</sup>

Some analysts contend that postwar Poland suffered crises of identity, penetration, and participation more severely than all the European socialist countries.<sup>9</sup> While these crises escalated during the 1970s, a significant number of autonomous civic organizations, such as the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR), came into being because existing official institutions failed to realize their objectives and could not meet citizen needs. It was up to new groups to limit the state's decision-making power and to introduce innovation into the social system.<sup>10</sup> In the legal Solidarity period of 1980-81, a full range of societal groups developed a successful coalition strategy of consolidated pluralism that mobilized the majority of society against the regime.<sup>11</sup> This effort had the direct impact of diminishing the preeminence of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) as the leading and guiding force in Polish society in the years following the suppression of Solidarity. Subsequent efforts to promote a political dialogue between non-party organizations and PUWP-sponsored associations such as PRON (Patriotic Movement for National Survival) failed—made all the worse by steadily deteriorating economic conditions.

7 Jacques Rupnik, *Dissent in Poland 1968-78*, in Rudolf Tokés, ed., *Opposition in Eastern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1979), p. 60.

8 David Ost, *Towards a Neocorporatist Solution in Eastern Europe*, *Eastern European Politics and Society*, vol. 3 (1989), p. 164.

9 Andrzej Korboński, "Nationalism and Pluralism and the Process of Political Development in Eastern Europe," *International Political Science Review*, vol. 10 (1989), pp. 254-259.

10 See Peter Raina, *Independent Social Movements in Poland* (London: Orbis Books, 1989), pp. 13-21.

11 See the chapters by Maria Halamska, Barbara Wajnert, and Paweł Kreczyński and Krzysztof Nowak in *Research in Social Movements: Conflicts and Change* (Greenwich, CN: JAI Press, 1988), volume 10. On pluralism in European communist systems, see Alexander C. Pacek and Roger E. Kanet, *Revolutionary Change in Eastern Europe*, in Ilpyong Kim and Jane Shapiro Zacek, eds., *Reform in Communist Countries* (Washington: The Washington Institute, 1991), pp. 103-140.

While the PUWP faced increasing challenges to its dominant position in Polish society the USSR continued to make clear its overriding interest in the maintenance of that domination. Because of its geographic location within the staging area for the second echelon of Warsaw Pact troops facing NATO countries the western region of Poland was of major military significance to the USSR. Besides serving as the primary logistical link to the twenty odd Soviet divisions deployed in East Germany Poland was also expected in case of war to function as a staging area from which Soviet naval infantry would move against the Danish islands and the West German port of Kiel. In 1981 Warsaw Pact Commander in Chief Marshal Viktor G. Kulikov reportedly attempted to convince President Brezhnev that Soviet armed forces should invade and occupy Poland because of the threat of Solidarity activities to local communist authority.<sup>12</sup>

Rather than risk the use of military force Kremlin decision makers first applied psychological pressures to contain the dissident movement in Poland. During spring and summer 1981 extended Warsaw Pact military exercises on Polish territory and Soviet military exercises near Polish borders served as threats that the USSR might invade to suppress the Solidarity movement.<sup>13</sup> Later Polish armed forces became the surrogate occupation authority for the USSR. Invoking martial law on 13 December 1981 the government of Gen Wojciech Jaruzelski implemented a plan drawn up under the supervision of the head of the Soviet military mission in Warsaw. By then the ruling PUWP had lost all credibility and much of its membership as political authority and economic power gravitated toward the twelve million strong urban and rural *Solidarnosc* labor unions.<sup>14</sup>

Nineteen months of military rule officially ended on 21 July 1983. After the ban on Solidarity as a legal organization however many martial law controls were permanently institutionalized through additions to the penal code. Regime spokesmen admitted holding one hundred and ninety political prisoners (non government estimates placed the total at between four and five thousand). The last two hundred and twenty five individuals were not released until the September 1986 amnesty.<sup>15</sup>

Gorbachev's initial statements about Poland did not diverge appreciably from past justifications of martial law. Though he admitted in the course of his speech to the tenth congress of the PUWP on 30 June 1986 that the crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s had involved a protest against distortions of socialism he added that to attack the socialist system attempt to subvert it from without to tear away this or that country from the socialist community—means to encroach not only on the will of the people but also on the entire postwar settlement and in the last analysis on peace.<sup>16</sup> Two years later during a trip to Poland Gorbachev attempted to convince the Poles of their good fortune that at this stage of history there has appeared a man like General Jaruzelski.<sup>17</sup>

Within Poland until 1986-87 there was a discernible weakening of opposition efforts as the number of independent activists declined markedly after the lifting of martial law and the issuance of an amnesty for

12 Cited by Drew Middleton in "Poland's Geography: Russia's Gateway to West," *New York Times* 6 April 1981 p. A 11. Former Gen. S. Prochazka stated that 45 000 of his Czechoslovak troops had been poised to invade Polish Silesia in coordination with Soviet movements from the USSR and a token East German presence in the West. The planned attack was cancelled on 5 December 1981. See Leszek Mazan's interview "Juz siedzielismy w czolgach," *Polityka* (Warsaw) no. 37 (15 September 1990) p. 13.

13 Military maneuvers on Polish territory lasted twenty two days until 7 April the longest in Warsaw Pact history. The USSR itself conducted exercises during 4-12 September 1981 in Belorussia and along the Baltic seacoast. See Maj Gen A.I. Skrylnik, chief editor *Zapad 81* (Moscow: Voenizdat 1982).

14 Gen. A.F. Shcheglov, head of the 800 member strong Soviet military mission to Warsaw, oversaw the development of the plan. For a discussion of the martial law decision by an insider see R.J. Kuklinski, *Wojna przeciw narodowi*, *Kultura* (Paris) May 1987 pp. 3-57. Some 800 000 members officially left the communist party during 1980-1982 according to Jozef Barecki et al. *Rocznik polityczny i gospodarczy 1981-1983* (Warsaw: PWE 1984) p. 151.

15 Amnesty International, *Report* (London: Amnesty International 1984) pp. 293-297, editorial "Freedom as Seen from Poland," *New York Times* 23 August 1986 p. 22.

16 "Vystuplenie Tovarischa Gorbacheva," *MS Pravda* 1 July 1986 p. 1.

17 Cited in Jackson Diehl, "Gorbachev Plays It Safe—and Makes No Gains—in Polish Visit," *Washington Post* 15 July 1988 p. A 15.

political prisoners Yet pluralist ideals and hopes for reforms were at an all time high among citizens<sup>18</sup> The veritable explosion of civic activity in 1988-89 was the direct outcome of a seriously weakened state disastrous economic problems including a severe decline in living standards and an increasingly well organized and determined civil society which not only survived the crackdown of December 1981 but benefited from the communist party's venal image In fact, the opposition in the post 1981 period became considerably diversified<sup>19</sup>

The explosion of autonomous political groups and the failure of the Jaruzelski government to generate support for its policies led the PUWP Central Committee in January 1989 to pass a pluralism resolution in an attempt to build support for needed economic reforms However the resolution was approved amid heated debate and apprehension among officials that legalizing independent trade unions could prove to be suicidal Less than a month later Politburo members deliberated on the prospects for a multiparty system where the PUWP might give up its leading role if ousted by a legitimate successor<sup>20</sup> While the regime did not define clearly what type of alternative party would be considered legitimate some officials expressed the desire for competing socialist parties vying for the voters' favor in free elections Nonetheless a variety of parties representing different ideological positions either appeared or in the case of pre-communist parties attempted to reestablish themselves

Another important development which spurred reform efforts was the establishment, by independent groups of umbrella organizations that could defend them more effectively against the state Government officials agreed to accept the establishment of separate public groups to deal with economic problems a tacit admission of the Party's inability to respond adequately to continuing economic deterioration<sup>21</sup> These initiatives along with many others including the spring 1989 negotiations between the regime and Solidarity were taken by organized citizens and not by officials elites or specialists

In Poland more than in any of the other East European countries the spontaneous growth of independent activity and its polarization were fueled by the failure of a highly centralized system The programs of autonomous groups aimed at pushing the country in a pluralist direction with a functioning parliamentary system an illegitimate communist leadership could offer nothing to stem the growing tide of demands

Unlike the situation of the hard line regimes of East Germany and Czechoslovakia however Poland's relationship with Gorbachev's USSR was convivial to the extent that the Soviets showed understanding of the complexity of the Polish situation The Jaruzelski leadership was less concerned about the spillover effects of Soviet reforms than with the positive endorsement that such reforms lent to Poland's own reform efforts<sup>22</sup> in pursuing reforms and also for taking a realistic stance about the nature and limits of intra-bloc relations Until Jaruzelski stepped down from power however there were no overt gestures of concern about the prospects for substantial economic and political instability in the immediate future Moscow remained calm during the Round Table discussions between the Polish government and Solidarity that in the face of growing civil disobedience led in April 1989 to the legalization of the independent labor movement and major electoral reforms a month later the Roman Catholic Church was granted full legal status

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18 The survey *Studenci Warszawy 1983* documents these views It was administered in the first half of that year with a sample of 650 students from Warsaw University and the Warsaw Polytechnic Cited in Maurice D Simon *Citizenship in a New Polish Context* in Charles J Bukowski and Mark A Chuchock eds *Prospects For Change in Socialist Systems Challenges and Responses* (New York Praeger 1987) pp 87-94

19 A Smolar and P Kende *The Role of Opposition The Role of Opposition Groups on the Eve of Democratization in Poland and Hungary 1987-1988* (Munich "PROJEKT" 1989) pp 11-34 and Jiri Pehe *Independent Movements in Eastern Europe Radio Free Europe Research* (hereafter RFER) RAD Background Research (hereafter BR)/22 (17 November 1988) pp 1-21

20 B de Weydenthal *PUWP Accepts the Prospect of Legalizing Solidarity RFER Polish Situation Report* (hereafter SR)/2 (20 January 1989) pp 3-6 and Roman Stefanowski *Poland's Economic Results in 1988 RFER Polish SR/4* (3 March 1989) pp 33-35

21 Louisa Vinton "Is Dialogue More Likely After the Strikes?" *RFER Polish SR/9* (7 June 1989) pp 3-8

22 Karen Dawisha *Eastern Europe Gorbachev and Reform* (Cambridge New York Cambridge University Press 1988) p 167



The Polish election of 5 June 1989 stood as the most far reaching manifestation of the reform process in Eastern Europe until the upheavals of fall 1989. In terms of formal political power the new electoral laws were meant to limit the power of the opposition. Only 35 percent of the 460 seats for the *Sejm* or lower house were filled through competitive contests while the elections for the newly established 100 seat Senate were open. The results proved a stunning defeat for the ruling Polish United Workers' Party. Its candidates failed to win a single seat for which there was a contested race while Solidarity candidates took all but one of the seats lost by the PUWP. Moreover all but two of thirty five key PUWP figures who ran unopposed failed to gain the required majority of the votes cast to ensure reelection. Government efforts to limit the impact of the new electoral system failed, largely because the voters were able to strike off so many officials from the ballot.<sup>23</sup>

Over summer 1989 much political jockeying occurred before the emergence of a Solidarity led government in September. In July the issue was the selection of a new president. Only after once withdrawing from the race and pushing the candidacy of the interior minister General Czesław Kiszczak was Wojciech Jaruzelski eventually elected president on 19 July by the margin of a single vote. After his election to the presidency Jaruzelski fulfilled an earlier pledge to resign as head of the PUWP in favor of long time Solidarity nemesis Mieczysław Rakowski. Though the communists successfully pushed through parliament General Kiszczak's candidacy for the premiership he failed to form a grand coalition government and on 24 August, Tadeusz Mazowiecki was selected as the new prime minister. Mazowiecki a Catholic intellectual with extensive political experience had played a major role in the creation of Solidarity in 1980.<sup>24</sup> He was editor in chief of *Tygodnik Solidarność* the communist bloc's first truly independent weekly.

After decades of the most intense and tenacious opposition activity in the region the Poles had broken the political dominance of the communist party. For the first time since World War II they had a non communist prime minister and a true coalition government (in which communists held but four of twenty three cabinet level appointments)—but one faced with imminent collapse of the economy and problems of generating effective public support for economic reform policies.

#### Independent Poland: the Path to Democracy and Prosperity?

The new government was committed to establishing and strengthening democratic political processes and within weeks opted for wide ranging and radical economic reforms that would create the foundations for a market economy. In January 1990 the remnants of the PUWP abolished the old party to form the Party of Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland. This new party however found virtually no support within the country. By spring it lost its stranglehold on politically organizing factories and offices and most of its property was confiscated by the *Sejm*. This decision and the debate that preceded it demonstrated the irrelevance of the PUWP's successor for contemporary Poland.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the successes of Mazowiecki's government in laying the foundations for economic reform by spring and summer of 1990 serious political divisions threatened the unity of the Solidarity movement. Mazowiecki was strongly criticized for the continuing role of communists and former communists in important political and administrative positions. But even when he fired ex communist cabinet members in July a parliamentary faction committed to Lech Wałęsa blocked the approval of Mazowiecki's nominees to replace the

23 Vladimir V. Kusin, 'Voting Communism out of Office Polish Style', *RFEER* RAD BR/108 (19 June 1989) pp. 1-5.

24 Two days before the vote President Gorbachev reportedly convinced Polish party leader Mieczysław Rakowski over the telephone that he should cooperate with Solidarity. See Richard F. Staar, 'Poland: Renewal or Stagnation?', *Current History* 88 no. 541 (November 1989) 373-76.

25 See J. B. de Weydenthal, 'Communists Dissolve Party Set Up New Social Democratic Group', *Report on Eastern Europe* (hereafter *REE*) vol. 1 no. 7 (1990) pp. 23-27; Louisa Vinton, 'The Politics of Property: Divesting the Polish Communist Party of Its Assets', *REE* vol. 1 no. 17 (1990) pp. 17-28.

communists. Only mediation by the Church which brought the two Solidarity leaders together resolved the parliamentary crisis.<sup>26</sup>

With the defeat of the common enemy of communism the various factions that made up Solidarity since its inception in 1980 found it increasingly difficult to hold together. The problem faced by Mazowiecki was the need to balance the demands of economic reform with those of maintaining social tranquility. The fact that Solidarity's roots are in the labor union movement and that those loyal to Lech Walesa had had a different political agenda from that of the government, became clear during 1990. The strike of railway workers for wage increases to balance inflation highlighted the problem. Moreover, the political divisions in Poland were complicated by personal rivalries among key personalities. While Walesa's political base remained in the labor movement and among the locally based citizens committees, Prime Minister Mazowiecki's support was concentrated among the intellectuals.

The divisions within Solidarity were formalized by summer 1990 with the emergence of two de facto parties: the Center Alliance formed by Walesa's close associates and the Civic Movement Democratic Action (with the Polish acronym of ROAD) committed to Mazowiecki.<sup>27</sup> The depth of the split became evident during the fall presidential election campaign between Walesa and Mazowiecki to select a replacement for President Jaruzelski. They attacked one another in an especially bitter manner, providing the opportunity for a complete outsider, political emigré Stanislaw Tyminski, to run a strong second in the initial round of the election on 25 November and to force a run-off with Walesa on 9 December, won decisively by the latter (74.25 to 25.75 percent).

In the face of the potential for political polarization, it is unclear whether as president Walesa will be able or willing to pursue the policies required to establish a stable democracy. However, his appointment of Jan Krzysztof Bielecki as prime minister, an economist committed to continuing the economic policies of his predecessor, argues well for Walesa's commitment to healing political divisions. Moreover, the retention in cabinet posts of central figures from the Mazowiecki government—especially Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz, the architect of the drastic program of economic reform—reinforces this assessment.<sup>28</sup>

Intertwined with the political issues have been those associated with the economic crisis. The first task facing the new Solidarity government when it took power was the need to bring inflation under control as part of a program of stimulating an economy on the verge of total collapse. During 1989, inflation had reached an estimated 640 percent. The economic reform package initiated on 1 January 1990 called for a four-phase program of action based on shock therapy to turn around the economy: 1) a 3-4 month period to break the inflationary spiral; 2) the decontrolling of consumer goods industries and the introduction of some privatization; 3) the much more difficult job of restructuring heavy industry; and 4) by late 1993, making Polish currency convertible. The first stage of the program was introduced on 1 January with the elimination of price controls and subsidies on about half of all goods (and an additional 30 percent by May). By mid-1990, these stiff measures brought inflation down to about 4 percent per month and stabilized the foreign exchange rate; however, by the end of the year it was estimated that the rate of inflation for the entire year was 250 percent. By March 1990, a plan for privatizing the economy was in place, and by May, Poland was generating a foreign trade surplus. The costs of this success, however, were very high: industrial output of state industries dropped more than 30 percent, gross domestic product for the year fell by an estimated 13 percent, official unemployment reached over one million or 8.1 percent of the total workforce by the end of the year, and real wages dropped by almost a third. On the other hand, there were positive indicators that the shock therapy was working hard.

26 Speech of Tadeusz Mazowiecki to parliament, Premier apeluje. *Gazeta wyborcza* 7-8 July 1990, p. 1. See also Louisa Vinton, "Government Contends with Collapse of Governing Coalition," *REE* vol. 1, no. 30 (1990), pp. 29-35, and Richard F. Staar, "Transition in Poland," *Current History* 89, no. 551 (December 1990), 401-04, 426-27.

27 On these political divisions, see the reports by Louisa Vinton, "Solidarity's Rival Offspring: Center Alliance and Democratic Action," *REE* vol. 1, no. 38 (1990), pp. 15-25; "Political Parties and Coalitions in the Local Government Elections," *REE* vol. 1, no. 26 (1990), pp. 26-30; and "Upheaval in Solidarity's Parliamentary Caucus," *REE* vol. 1, no. 47 (1990), pp. 24-27.

28 See Stephen Engelberg, "New Prime Minister's Cabinet Is Approved," *New York Times* 13 January 1991, p. 4.

currency reserves were at a record \$4 1 billion and substantial positive balances were recorded in trade with both the East and the West—four billion rubles and \$4 5 billion respectively <sup>29</sup>

### The Soviet Union and Independent Poland

To this point the background relevant to an assessment of Soviet Polish relations has been presented. In this final substantive section the specifics of Soviet policy toward Poland in the recent past and likely future developments in relations between the two countries will be discussed. As noted, an essential element in the revolutionary transformation that swept over Eastern Europe since summer 1989 was the reassessment of Soviet foreign policy goals and methods that influenced not only the Soviet view of its neighbors but the very nature of the socio-political systems of the region.

After the imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981, Soviet Polish relations stabilized. With this stabilization came the interpretation that Soviet officials held towards the labor unrest and near collapse of Poland's communist government. Elements hostile to socialist rule—tools of Western propaganda machines and puppets of anti-socialist movements—were charged with responsibility for the manipulation of the labor troubles <sup>30</sup>. This strongly negative interpretation of events in Poland as the result of Western intervention lasted until 1988, in response to the series of price increases and strikes that rocked Poland early that year. *Pravda* noted that the enemies of socialism backed the strikes <sup>31</sup>. By portraying the strikers as hooligans or as stooges of Western imperialism, the Soviets could continue to present the Polish crisis along traditional ideological lines.

By September 1988, when the Polish government finally accepted the strikers' demands for the first set of discussions, the Soviet position had shifted. Solidarity was referred to simply as the opposition. Later, the Round Table agreements of 5 April 1989, which led to the competitive elections that brought down the communist government, were received in Moscow as an example of Poland's struggle for the renewal of socialism. The legalization of Solidarity and the promise of at least partial representation in the *Sejm* by members of the opposition was presented as the development of the Polish People's Republic as a state of socialist parliamentary democracy and as a society based on political and trade union pluralism <sup>32</sup>.

Soviet reaction to the overwhelming defeat of the PUWP in the parliamentary elections of June 1989 proved to be much calmer than would have been expected. The initial election reports lamented the humiliation of the PUWP at the polls and the formation of the first non-communist government in Poland since the imposition of communist rule in 1944 did meet with some notes of concern from the Soviet media. But, in line with new thinking, Poles were presented as having the right to try to find a solution to their own problems <sup>33</sup>. After the swearing in of the government of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the Soviet press emphasized the Soviet desire to maintain cordial relations and cautioned against efforts at thinking in terms of revenge <sup>34</sup>.

29 See Vlad Sobell, "Shock Therapy as a Tool of Economic Reform," *REE* vol. 1, no. 31 (1990) pp. 49-53, and Louisa Vinton, "Privatization Plan Prepared," *REE* vol. 1, no. 14 (1990) pp. 28-32. For data on the state of the Polish economy, see *Statystyki Polski*, supplement to *Rzeczpospolita*, 30 July 1990; *Gazeta wyborcza*, 24 August 1990; and the report of Krzysztof Lutostanski of the Main Statistical Office, as cited in *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no. 240, 19 December 1990, p. 1.

30 See for example, "Between the Bug and the Odra," *International Affairs*, no. 6 (June 1986) pp. 123-24. On Soviet policy, see Roger E. Kanet, "The Polish Crisis and Poland's Allies," in Jack Bielasiak and Maurice D. Simon, eds., *Polish Politics: Edge of the Abyss* (New York: Praeger, 1984) pp. 317-44, and Arthur R. Rachwald, *In Search of Poland: The Superpowers' Response to Solidarity, 1980-1989* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1990).

31 Political commentator Vitaliy Koronov traced the history of efforts by imperialist circles and the antisocialist forces still intact in those countries to rouse counterrevolutionary forces in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1980s. The strikes unleashed by Solidarity were undermining efforts at democratization in Poland, he maintained. Vitaliy Koronov, "Zemlia vos midesiatykh. V poiskakh novogo dinamita," *Pravda*, 6 September 1988, p. 4.

32 Urok kompromissov—V Varshave zakonchilas vstrecha za kruglym stolom, *Izvestia*, 6 April 1989, p. 5.

33 Nuzhna shirokaia koalitsiia—Pol'sha posle vyborov, *Izvestia*, 22 June 1989, p. 4. Pol'sha—Oppozitsiia. Razdeliat chitoby vlast'ovat, *Izvestia*, 11 August 1989, p. 4, and "V press tsentre MID SSSR," *Pravda*, 12 August 1989, p. 4.

34 Viktor Shutkevich, "Premiery i kaskadery," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 22 August 1989, p. 3.

In the first sixteen months after the emergence of the Solidarity government, Polish foreign policy underwent changes as far reaching as those in the domestic political and economic realms. Most important were the assertions of Polish independence and the working out of a new relationship with the Soviet Union: the concerns about the implications for Polish security of the reunification of Germany and the entrance of Poland into the new integrated Europe. The relationship with the Soviet Union underwent several important changes during 1990. Of symbolic importance was the public admission by the USSR after almost five decades of denial that tens of thousands of Polish officers had indeed been murdered by Soviet forces at Katyn Forest and elsewhere early in World War II. Probable graves were identified, and President Gorbachev turned over to the Polish government documents relevant to the case.<sup>35</sup>

Though the Polish government made no attempt to leave the Soviet alliance system during 1990 it announced a new defense doctrine that in effect, annulled Poland's adherence to a joint military doctrine within the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO). Pressures mounted in Poland to speed up the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Polish territory. Some 20 000 soldiers were scheduled to depart by the end of 1990 with an additional 58 000 still stationed in Poland. In a wide ranging debate within the Senate in early September 1990 the entire foundation of relations with the USSR was questioned. Although Senate resolutions are only advisory they do point to the strength of public sentiment in Poland for a substantial change in the terms of the relationship with the USSR. Yet the Polish government remained sensitive to the need for great care in not pushing too rapidly in its new relationship with the USSR.<sup>36</sup> Throughout this period Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski outlined on various occasions the central elements of the foreign policy of the Polish state. He characterized relations with the USSR as normal interstate and intergovernmental relations no longer based on ideological considerations.<sup>37</sup>

Trade has emerged as an area of increasing concern in Soviet Polish relations. Despite contractual obligations problems in the USSR's petroleum industry have resulted in decreases in Soviet oil deliveries to Poland. Three times during the first eight months of 1990 the Soviets unilaterally changed the terms of trade cancelled guaranteed supplies of petroleum and demanded that the Poles pay for contracted imports in hard currency rather than through settlement procedures long in place within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). The issue of trade relations with the USSR is of great importance for the Poles since the revival of their own economy depends to a great extent on their ability to restructure and develop their economic relations with the USSR and their other neighbors. One result of the visit to the USSR by Foreign Minister Skubiszewski in October 1990 was an agreement for the delivery of 10 million tons of Soviet oil in 1991—2.7 million tons less than agreed to in the past and only 70 percent of Poland's needs.<sup>38</sup>

Another issue of special importance in Poland's foreign policy was the concern about the implications of German reunification for Poland's western boundary and the initial refusal of Chancellor Helmut Kohl to give permanent guarantees about the Oder-Neisse border. The general agreement signed at the two-plus-four talks on German unification in Paris in July and the bilateral treaty between the Federal Republic and Poland signed on 14 November 1990 put this issue to rest and thus reduced the perceived security need of the continued presence in Poland of Soviet forces.<sup>39</sup>

35 Karen Lemiski and J. B. de Weydenthal, "Soviet Officials Identify Probable Graves of Polish Officers" *REE* vol 1 no 32 (1990) pp 27-29.

36 See Anna Sabbat Swidlicka, "Senate Calls for Changes in Eastern Policy" *REE* vol 1 no 39 (1990) pp 21-26 and Aleksandr Osokin, "A esli glazami Poliakov vzhlanat na prebyvanie Sovetskikh voisk v ich strane" *Ogonek* no 40 (1990) pp 30-31.

37 See Vladimir Matovic, "Vlastima—ne aplaudiramo" *Borba* 21-22 April 1990 p 6 translated as "Skubiszewski Interviewed by SFRY Paper" *FBIS EEU* 20 April 1990 pp 46-47.

38 J. B. de Weydenthal, "Prospects for Soviet Polish Trade" *REE* vol 1 no 44 (1990) pp 23-25. The Soviet trade position is outlined by Jerzy Osiatynski, Director of the Central Planning Office in "Przykręcanie Kurka" *Rzeczpospolita* 14 September 1990 p 5. On Skubiszewski's visit to Moscow see *Rzeczpospolita* 17 October 1990 and "Ofitsialnyi vizit K. Skubishchevskogo v SSSR," *Vestnik Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del SSSR* no 21 21 November 1990 pp 3-5.

39 J. B. de Weydenthal, "Settling the Oder-Neisse Issue" *REE* vol 1 no 31 (1990) pp 46-48. For the treaty see "Historyczny akt" *Rzeczpospolita* 15 November 1990.



Throughout 1990 the Polish democratic government also engaged in efforts to establish special ties with Czechoslovakia and Hungary the two other emerging democracies in East-Central Europe In part the efforts to forge these special contacts were related to the desire to change the nature of relations within the WTO and to strengthen Poland's position in relationship to its major long term objective of full entry into a new and integrated Europe <sup>40</sup>

### Conclusions

After this examination of the domestic and Soviet related sources of change in Poland and of the impact of these changes on relations with the USSR a brief effort will be made to assess likely developments in Polish Soviet relations in the near future This assessment is based on several assumptions about developments in both countries First of all on the USSR side the discussion is predicated on the assumption that the leadership will continue to be engaged in dealing with domestic economic and political problems that will be virtually all engrossing—the rejuvenation of a moribund economy the prevention of civil war among hostile ethnic communities and the working out of new constitutional relationships among the republics that comprise the USSR Closely related to these concerns will be the continuing effort to strengthen relations with the West especially the United States in order to ensure the international stability required to focus on these domestic problems and to acquire the capital needed to rebuild the economy However given the military crackdown in the Baltics and Gorbachev's general retreat from reform by early 1991 the international environment in Europe may rapidly deteriorate Should that occur the picture painted below may be too sanguine

On the Polish side we assume continued rapid movement toward a free economy the commitment to strengthening Polish independence vis à vis the USSR and the objective of integrating Poland within the economic and political structures of a united Europe We assume that despite the centuries old hostilities between Poland and Russia and the oppressive and exploitative nature of the Soviet Polish relationship from 1944 to 1989 for reasons of enlightened self interest, Polish policy toward the USSR will not be based on efforts to gain revenge or to openly pursue anti Soviet initiatives

Based on these assumptions a brief discussion follows of the likely evolution of the Soviet Polish relationship over the next few years In the military sphere it is most likely that all USSR troops will be withdrawn from Polish territory by late 1992 Not only in Poland but throughout the entire Warsaw Pact region the Soviets have already committed themselves to withdrawal and the demise of the Warsaw Pact as a military alliance reinforces the reduced Soviet military role As Vladimir Kusin has argued the end of the superpower confrontation and of the USSR's commitment to controlling all developments within East Central Europe have deprived Soviet forces stationed in the region with any *raison d'être* The collapse of the system of communist internationalism directed from Moscow has eliminated the mission of the USSR's troops stationed in East Central Europe <sup>41</sup> In fact, given Soviet troop withdrawals the disappearance of the German Democratic Republic and its army and the decision of several member countries to reduce their role within the Warsaw Pact, the decision was to be expected that converted the Pact along with the CMEA into predominantly political organizations whose purposes relate to ensuring stable political relations within the region What emerges from those changes will depend primarily on political developments within the USSR and on the European wide political and security system that evolves over the next decade The main point, however is the fact that Poland will no longer be bound militarily to the USSR and that Warsaw Pact mechanisms will no longer exist through which Soviet leaders will be able—as they were for forty years—to control Poland

Closely related to this issue is the fact that the disappearance of the PUWP and the effective disappearance of the CMEA as a functioning organization have removed two additional mechanisms that have been important to the ability of the USSR to exert strong influence even control over developments in Poland Current and

40 See J B de Weydenthal, Poland and the Soviet Alliance System *REE* vol. 1 no 26 (1990) p 32 and J B de Weydenthal, Poland Finding a Place in Europe *REE* vol 1 no 52 (1990) p 23

41 Vladimir V Kusin "The Soviet Troops Mission Abandoned" *REE* vol 1 no 36 (1990) pp 37 38

future relations will parallel those that exist between other countries that is they will be based on negotiated agreements in which both sides attempt to accomplish key objectives

This does not mean that Soviet Polish relations will not experience serious problems. Wrongs of the past are neither easily nor quickly forgotten. Behavior patterns of the past are not easily modified. Thus antagonisms toward Russia and the USSR are likely to be an important element in the Polish foreign policy debate and may even on occasion influence policy decisions themselves. In such cases we can well expect friction in relations. Related to this is the loudly expressed concern in Poland about the rights of Polish compatriots living in the Soviet Union—especially in Lithuania and Ukraine.<sup>42</sup>

Poland is likely to continue to try to establish political and especially economic ties with the western republics of the USSR. The decentralization of economic decision making in the USSR and the emergence of at least semi autonomous republics within the constitutional framework of the USSR has resulted in an expansion of mutually beneficial activities at this level. It is not clear to what extent the crackdown in the Baltics portends a return to the centralized decision making that for more than half a decade has characterized the USSR. At the same time from the Polish perspective the restructuring of the framework within which economic relations occur with the USSR is essential. Since 1989 the USSR has tended to behave in the economic realm with heavy handed disregard for the interests of former clients similar to that displayed in the past. Until a new more equitable framework is created trade relations are likely to remain a source of friction in relations between the two countries.

While the Poles have already restructured their security and political relationship with the Soviet Union and are also committed to major changes in their economic relations they also seek major changes in their relations with the West.<sup>43</sup> Of major concern is the establishment of relations with the European Community that will result in Poland's full reentry into the European community of nations. This process will depend on Poland's ability to establish a stable political system and a successful and productive economy. Given the level of Poland's continuing economic dependence on the USSR—for both raw materials and markets—the long term solution of economic problems depends on success in restructuring economic relations with the USSR as well as on the willingness of the West to provide substantial financial support.

There are many well known historical reasons that relations between independent post communist Poland and the Soviet Union/Russia may be tense and conflictual. There are just as many reasons beginning with economic and security concerns that call for the two countries to overcome past differences and work out a relationship that will be mutually beneficial. In the course of the first sixteen months after the creation of the Solidarity government, they made substantial progress in this direction and leaders such as Gorbachev and Walesa seem committed to continuing this effort. Though it is impossible to predict with any degree of certainty the outcome of current developments one can only hope that stability and mutual benefit will predominate in the relations between the two countries.

42 During his visit to Moscow in November 1989 Prime Minister Mazowiecki discussed two major issues with his Soviet counterparts: trade relations and the position of the Polish minority in the USSR. See Tomasz Lubiński, "Kartki z Rosji," *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* 8 December 1989 p. 40. On the call for dual citizenship for Poles in the USSR and the opening up of Polish language schools and churches see Krzysztof Leski in *Gazeta wyborcza* 23 November 1989 p. 1.

43 See the interview with Foreign Minister Skubiszewski who noted: "But most of all we see cooperation as embracing all of Europe with emphasis on rebuilding the link with the EC with which we are interested in political cooperation though we are primarily concerned about economic cooperation." Krzysztof Leski, "Wywiad z ministrem Krzysztofem Skubiszewskim. Rewidujemy Układ Warszawski," *Gazeta wyborcza* 26 July 1990 p. 3.

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